

HOW TO... Make a 3D animation

Create impressive 3D animations quickly and easily using the free software on this month's cover DVD. Lauren Taylor shows you how

ON THE COVER DVD If you thought that creating 3D animations was an expensive hobby involving costly computers and software that only employees of Pixar and Dreamworks could hope to get their hands on, you'd be wrong. For one thing, it won't cost you a penny thanks to the full copy of DAZ 3D Carrara 5 Standard on this month's cover DVD. This program isn't as complicated to use as you might imagine, either. To help beginners get started, Carrara includes lots of ready-made objects, effects and animation controls.

In Carrara 5, a document is called a scene. You start by opening a new scene in which to build your model, and progress through the animation process using the tools found in five 'rooms': Assemble, Model, Storyboard, Texture and Render. Each room focuses on one aspect of the modelling process.

The name of the room you are in appears in the top right-hand corner of the window. In the Assemble room you can create objects, place lighting and cameras and specify effects. Here, beginners can do everything they want using the predefined objects, scenes, special effects and so on. More advanced users can switch to the Model room to work on individual objects, build their animation in the Storyboard room and add texture effects in the Texture room. The Render room is where you take your finished work for Carrara to turn into a 3D animated movie.

Here we'll guide you through the basics of using Carrara to make a simple 3D animation.

1 Start Carrara. From the File menu select New, then click on New Empty Doc. The

main part of the window is the 3D workspace. At the moment this contains just an empty grid, known as the working box. You'll see toolbars across the top and down the left-hand side of the workspace. On the right is the Properties panel, while across the bottom are the animation controls and two tabbed panels: the Browser and the Sequencer. The large yellow arrow to the right of the working box is the light source for your scene.

2 The first item on the toolbar at the top of the workspace is a sphere. Click on the little arrow below the sphere to see a full list of basic geometric shapes, known as primitive objects. Alternatively, click on the Insert menu; the first seven items listed, down to Infinite Plane, are primitive objects. If you select the Sphere from the toolbar, for example, you can then click anywhere in the working box to place a sphere object there. Select Sphere from the Insert menu, and Carrara will place the object in the centre of the bottom of your working box. The red X and green Y axis show its position on the bottom grid, while the blue Z axis shows its vertical position.

3 The first group of tools on the left-hand toolbar allow you to move the object you're working on. The second group of tools move the cameras used to view the object. Click on the Scale tool. Move the cursor to the boxed end of an axis, then click and drag to change the shape of the sphere. Our sphere is now below the bottom of the working box. You can see this if you move the camera around. Click on the

Dolly tool and move the view around until you can see beneath the working box.

4 Select Undo from the Edit menu until you're back to a blank working box. Let's look at some of the ready-made 3D graphics available in Carrara. Go to the Browser tab at the bottom of the screen and click on Objects. A menu will appear on the left. Click on an entry, and the ready-made objects in that category will appear on the right. To use one, click on it and drag it to the working box. You can play around with the size and shape of the object, either by going to the Model room or staying in the Assemble room and using the tools on the left or the Properties panel on the right.

5 It's time to add some texture to your object. If you're used to modelling in 3D, do this in the Texture room. However, beginners may prefer to start with some of the predefined textures available in the Assemble room. Go to the Browser and click on the Shaders tab. Select a category from the menu on the left; previews of available textures will appear on the right. Click on one you like and drag it to your object.

6 Beginners can also use some of the ready-made animation effects available in the Browser. Click on the Misc tab. To get our 3D sea shell to spin, we chose the ZSpin option from the Behaviours category. To see your animation in action from a number of different views, click on the button with four small squares, which is at the top of the working space. Then click on the Play button beneath the working space. **CS**

